

PERFINS OF THE CITY OF LONDON

By P.G. Day

The perfin die used by the City of London and based on the City Coat of Arms is well known to all perfin collectors. The discovery recently of a seemingly unrecorded die led me to undertake some research into them and this article is the outcome. I hope members will find it of interest and perhaps some will be able to answer a few of the problems raised.

Heraldically, the Arms of the City of London are "argent, a cross gules. On the dexter chief quarter a sword erect of the second". Although not directly related to the perfin, the crest and supporters as used are "Crest, a dragon's sinister wing, expanded argent, charged with cross gules. Supporters, two dragons with wings expanded argent charged on the wings with a cross gules".

It is not without interest that according to informed heraldic sources, these have never been authorised by the College of Arms. The Coat of Arms is recorded at the College without a crest and supporters, and in a seal dated 1539, recourse was had to the ancient practice of depicting the whole or (as in this case) part of the device of the shield upon a fan surmounting the Arms. In course of time this fan has, through ignorance, been converted or developed into a wing, but the rays of the fan in this instance are preserved in the "rays" of the dragon's wing (charged with a cross) which the crest is now supposed to be. The real supporters of the City of London as recorded on the 1539 seal are two lions. The supporters now used (two dragons) are new adornments, of which no example can be found before the 17th century.

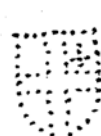
As to the perfin dies themselves: In the H. Tilles Catalogue two dies are illustrated for the City of London, catalogue numbers 17.1 and 17.2., and examples of these, especially the latter, are not difficult to acquire.

Recently the discovery of a seemingly unrecorded die has been my good fortune, and I wonder whether this may be an early provisional die or whether, in fact, it is already known to other collectors. It is on a

Q.V. 2d vermilion postmarked in London on June 18th 1898. The die is made up of a total of 76 pins and the overall height is 15½mm. The shield shape differs from the catalogued ones being more ornamental at the base.



New Die



17.1



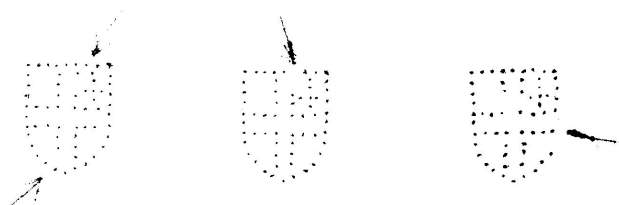
17.2

Die 17.1 is found on late Victorian issues but I have insufficient examples to guess at a terminal date of usage. The earliest I have is on Q.V. 1d lilac (Die 11) dated August 29th 1898, some two months after my first die. Did the two overlap in usage, and can members "close the gap" between the dates of use?

The third die 17.2 was in use until recently being noted by me on decimal Machins up to about 1973.

The Perfins of the City of London continued

The Chamberlain of London was responsible for the stocks of perforated postage stamps and his office distributed them for use by all Departments of the Corporation. They were obtained in bulk, pre-perforated, from Messrs. Slopers Limited. Their use is no longer current however as the greater part of the Corporation's mail is now franked, and the few adhesive stamps that are used are purchased directly by the departments concerned from their local Post Office.



Die 17.2 was in use from at least the 1920's and although I have personally not seen it on values over 5d, I presume they must so exist. I have noted them used on the low values of the 1929 P.U.C, commemoratives. During its use some

missing pin varieties can be found, and for interest I illustrate three of them here.

I hope these notes will stimulate members with more knowledge than I to answer some of the queries raised, and perhaps come up with fresh information also.
